



**Testimony of Mark Tercek, President and CEO
The Nature Conservancy
Before the House Committee on Energy & Commerce
January 15, 2009, 10:30 AM**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your invitation to testify today as a member of the United States Climate Action Partnership, or USCAP.

My name is Mark Tercek, President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization—working in all 50 states and over 30 countries around the world—with the mission of preserving the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Climate change puts at risk the plants, animals and ecosystems that we are committed to protect. It knows no boundaries and so threatens all of our conservation investments, which have protected more than 115 million acres around the world.

Unequivocal scientific evidence indicates that climate change is now occurring at an unprecedented rate. Glaciers and ice caps, built up over centuries, are melting away within decades. Heat waves and wildfires are on the rise. Monsoons and other precipitation patterns are changing, causing more frequent and intense droughts in some areas and severe flooding in others. Warmer ocean temperatures are fueling more intense and damaging hurricanes. The build up of CO₂ is acidifying the oceans, threatening the health of coral reefs and other marine ecosystems.

In the past, the planet has gone through natural cycles of gradual warming and cooling, but the changes seen today are happening faster than species and ecosystems can adapt.

Conservancy scientists are observing the early consequences of climate change first hand. Warmer seas are causing coral bleaching and extensive reef die-offs from the Coral Triangle and South Pacific to the Caribbean. Warming trends are pushing species to move toward the poles or up mountain slopes. Vegetation communities are shifting from tropical, temperate and boreal ecosystems. The ability of species to respond is impeded by human land use changes that limit available habitat and cut off potential migration corridors. Together, habitat loss and climate change have already been linked to the extinction of, for example, 75 amphibian species in Central American forests.

Climate change is also adversely affecting the human environment and the ecosystems on which they depend. Many of these changes will be negative. Malaria and other deadly diseases are expanding. Water stress, especially in arid regions like the African Sahel, will increase. Agricultural productivity will decline as temperatures rise by even 1 or 2 degrees. The world's poor are expected to suffer disproportionately, forcing vulnerable people to change their resource use, to migrate or to place even greater demands on the natural ecosystems around them, including protected areas.

As one of the world's largest conservation organizations, with approximately 700 scientists on staff and the largest network of private protected areas in the world, The Nature Conservancy has both a tremendous stake in avoiding the most negative impacts of climate change and a responsibility to play a significant role in pursuing solutions.

Toward those ends, we are advocating for legislative and policy solutions that can drive the rapid pace of emissions reductions that is needed to avoid the worst impact of climate change to people and to nature.

We believe that the protection, management and restoration of forests are critical for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation that account for nearly one-fifth of annual global greenhouse gas emissions. Providing access to carbon markets for forest carbon activities will ensure that we are able to achieve emissions reductions at the scale needed to sufficiently address climate change while serving as a valuable cost-effective solution for U.S. companies.

We must also take measures to help make wildlife and ecosystems more resilient to adverse impacts from climate change. In our programs across the U.S. and around the world, we are leading efforts to demonstrate what works in real places to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. We believe any climate change policy approach must include dedicated funding for strategies that help human and natural communities adapt to the changing environment.

The U.S. in particular, as the country responsible for more historical greenhouse gas emissions than any other country and one of the world's two largest emitters, has a unique responsibility to show leadership on this issue. U.S. climate legislation is urgently needed to reduce our emissions, to show the rest of the world what can be achieved and to leverage the participation of the world's major emitters in an international climate agreement that sets us on a path to safeguarding the Earth's natural systems.

The Nature Conservancy joined the US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP) in May 2007 to address these threats and to participate in what we believe is a centrally

important coalition working to enact environmentally- and economically-effective climate change legislation. We joined USCAP to ensure that a strong policy framework was developed to address this critical challenge and to shine a spotlight on the need to reduce emissions through the protection and restoration of forests, which hold or sequester vast amounts of carbon, and on strategies to help ecosystems and wildlife adapt to an already changing planet.

We continue to believe that USCAP represents a unique and diverse grouping of some of the nation's largest companies and influential non-governmental organizations working on the issue of climate change.

USCAP launched its landmark report, titled *A Call for Action*¹, in January 2007, which lays out a framework for climate protection legislation. Today it includes 31 businesses and leading environmental organizations.² USCAP recognizes that the United States faces an urgent need to reinvigorate our nation's economy, make the country more energy secure, and take meaningful action to slow, stop and reverse GHG emissions to address climate change. Thoughtful and comprehensive national energy and climate policy will help secure our economic prosperity and provide American businesses and the nation's workforce with the opportunity to innovate and succeed.

We support enactment of an economy-wide, market-driven approach which includes a well-crafted cap-and-trade program that places specified limits on GHG emissions, robust cost-containment measures, complementary policies and measures

¹ *A Call for Action* available at: <http://us-cap.org/USCAPCallforAction.pdf>.

² The current members of USCAP are: Alcoa; American International Group, Inc.; Boston Scientific Corporation; BP America, Inc.; Caterpillar Inc.; Chrysler LLC; ConocoPhillips; Deere & Co.; Dow Chemical Company; Duke Energy; DuPont; Environmental Defense Fund; Exelon Corporation; Ford Motor Company; FPL Group; General Electric; General Motors Corporation; Johnson & Johnson; Marsh, Inc.; Natural Resources Defense Council; NRG Energy; PepsiCo North America; Pew Center on Global Climate Change; PG&E Corporation; PNM Resources; Rio Tinto; Shell Oil Company; Siemens Corporation; The Nature Conservancy; World Resources Institute; and Xerox Corporation.

to supplement the cap-and-trade program, and a fully funded federal technology research, development, demonstration, and deployment program for climate-friendly technologies. Properly designed legislation will encourage innovation, enhance America's energy security, foster economic growth, improve our balance of trade, and provide critically needed U.S. leadership on this vital global challenge.

We recognize the challenge facing this Committee in crafting comprehensive climate change legislation and we very much hope that the Committee will call upon our unique partnership to help sort through these complexities. The need to begin the transformation of our economy to a sustainable, secure, low-carbon future is compelling and timely; indeed, this will only become more difficult, and more costly, if Congress delays action.

Recent debate surrounding the crafting of an economic stimulus package early in the 111th Congress has included discussion of such an energy investment. We agree that such efforts can and should be taken as early as possible. Additionally, a central tenet of our *Call for Action* is that in order to effect the change needed throughout the economy, an economy-wide cap-and-trade system is essential. When combined with complementary measures, the resulting new vision and policy direction will spur the innovation through which America has always excelled. When given the proper tools, incentives and market signals, the American entrepreneurial spirit will lead to sustainability solutions required to meet our many economic, energy, environmental and national security challenges.

USCAP has attempted to help inform congressional deliberations over the past two years. Following our *Call for Action*, we have provided Congress with international principles and more detailed information on the topics of cost containment, energy

efficiency, geologic carbon storage technologies and a greenhouse gas registry.

Further, our diverse and broad-based coalition has and will continue to serve as a sounding board for policy-makers as they contemplate legislative options.

Over the past six months, USCAP members have worked diligently to refine our policy objectives in order to better advise Congress and the incoming Administration on workable solutions. We have agreed upon a framework for a balanced and integrated approach to key linked issues that must be addressed in any national climate legislation.

USCAP is committed to helping Congress find workable, cost-effective approaches to climate change. We believe that path forward exists and that we must embark on the journey with deliberate speed. Representing many sectors of the economy, we believe we are in the unique position to work with the President-elect, Congress and all other stakeholders to enact an environmentally effective, economically sustainable and fair climate change program. We look forward to working with the Committee in the 111th Congress to ensure prompt enactment of national climate protection legislation.

Thank you for your interest in USCAP and climate change legislation. The Nature Conservancy looks forward to working with this Committee, the entire Congress, and the Administration to enact forward-looking climate legislation that protects the natural world and the people who depend on it.